

**NAGPRA: A History of Tribal Relations with the U.S. Government, and the Importance of
Tribal Voices in Repatriation**

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

Nichole Roberts

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Cailin Murray

**Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana**

December 2018

Expected Date of Graduation

December 2018

Abstract

When Europeans first arrived on this continent, they were surprised to find a race of people already living here. Since that time, relationships between Euro-american governments and tribal leaders have been a complex tapestry with varying balances of power. This project will give a brief overview of the history of these relationships, but its main purpose is to inform the general public about the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and its continuing importance to Native American tribes. Repatriation is a complicated process, and the United States government has a troubling history of ignoring native voices in matters regarding native peoples. The goal of this project is to emphasize the importance of native voices in deciding what to do with native remains and how to teach about native cultures.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Cailin Murray for advising me on this project. Her vast experience and knowledge of NAGPRA and Native Tribes in the Great Lakes Region were invaluable to me both in the completion of this project and in its inspiration.

I would also like to thank Christine Thompson for taking time out of her busy schedule to sit down with me and talk about her experiences working with NAGPRA and tribal representatives.